

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2021

The Honorable Kate Brown  
Governor  
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254  
Salem, OR 97301-4047

Dear Governor Brown,

As our nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress is drafting infrastructure legislation desperately needed so that communities across the country can emerge from this crisis stronger and more resilient. The White House and congressional Democrats are committed to addressing racial equity and economic justice in this legislation. As such, at the core of Democrats' proposals is a program to reconnect and revitalize areas that were harmed by the construction of the Interstate Highway System, called Reconnecting Communities/ Neighborhoods. The Reconnecting Communities program will offer Oregon a historic opportunity to repair the harm done to the Albina community: the Rose Quarter Improvement Project.

In its current iteration, the plan for the Rose Quarter Improvement Project from Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) does not take advantage of the opportunity to reconnect a community divided by a freeway to help ensure economic opportunities and a more equitable future. Based on conversations with members of the community, it has become clear that the Albina neighborhood and the entire Portland region would benefit from buildable caps over I-5 that would reconnect the historic Albina neighborhood and provide opportunities to heal the social, economic, and environmental damage done to the community in the 50 years since the highway corridor's creation. This project has the potential to be truly transformational -- adding multiple blocks of retail, green space, and housing to revitalize an area that has previously been defined by bottlenecked traffic headed in and out of the state. A commitment to justice for the Albina community must include smart infrastructure that builds economic opportunity while protecting from environmental harm.

It's time to put the power to build back better firmly in the hands of the Albina community. We all stand poised to speak with one voice in support of this opportunity to repair and renew. Local and regional governments have embraced a vision that reconnects and revitalizes historic Albina. Community groups continue to press for this vision as well. If the project includes these buildable caps, we will fight to secure additional federal funds to help deliver racial justice to a critical transportation infrastructure project in our state. We ask that the Oregon Department of

Transportation make the most of this opportunity to reverse the historical damage done to this important community.

Thank you for your prompt attention. We look forward to collaboration in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

CC: Bob Van Brocklin, Chair, Oregon Transportation Commission  
Alando Simpson, Oregon Transportation Commission  
Julie Brown, Oregon Transportation Commission  
Sharon Smith, Oregon Transportation Commission  
Kris Strickland, Director, Oregon Department of Transportation